

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

Madison 6

DEPARTMENT OF BACTERIOLOGY

December 6, 1954

Prof. Joshua Lederberg
Genetics Department
202 Genetics

Dear Josh:

Your question about the quotation caused me to spend a lot of time over the week end but it was lots of fun finding the answer. In Dubos' book, "Louis Pasteur, Free Lance of Science", the quotation you mention is given on page 101 as follows: "In the field of experimentation, chance favors only the prepared mind". However, Dubos gives no exact reference to this statement. I found that it appears in an address which Pasteur gave at Lyon in March, 1871. This was published as follows:

Le Salut public, Lyon, March 1871, Revue scientifique,
22 Juillet, 1871 2 ser., I, pp. 73-76. In: Oeuvres de
Pasteur, VII, p. 215, par. 2.

"Mais ce qui est certain, c'est que, de nos jours, le
hasard ne favorise l'invention que pour les esprits
préparés aux découvertes par de patientes études et de
persévérants efforts."

As is often the case, the actual statement appears to me to be more significant than the often quoted translation. The actual statement brings in the necessity for patient study and persevering effort. It seems to me that this is most important.

After you got me started I tried to find the exact reference to the quotation which appears on the cover of the Journal of Bacteriology. I have not found it yet but Dubos gives it on page 87.

Let me know some time when you have about an hour free because I would like to talk with you about plans for our department's work in the future.

Sincerely yours,



William B. Sarles, Chairman
Department of Bacteriology

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